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SWEDEN - HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION

A. POLICIES

1. Highway transport is second in importance to rails in the transport economy of Sweden. It provides the flexibility of transport essential to the economy of Sweden where industry and population centers are scattered to such an extent as to make concentration of rail facilities unprofitable. The basic policy of the Government with respect to road transport is to allow the highway carriers a large degree of freedom of action. Policies of restriction are practiced only as required by the overall interest of the state.
2. Policies concerning road transport are determined by the Board of Roads and Waterways in the Ministry of Communications. The policies determined by the Board are not subject to the control of any authority other than that of the Ministry of Communications, which integrates and coordinates all policies dealing with communications and public works.
3. Strategic and military considerations have had relatively little influence upon the highway transport policies of Sweden. The geographical position of the country together with its topography would render ineffective any attempt to base transport policies upon strategic and military considerations. Sweden's historic policy of neutrality in international conflicts also has permitted emphasis on economic needs rather than those of a military nature.
4. The Government does not directly subsidize highway transport operations, but it does expend considerable sums on the construction and upkeep of highway facilities.
5. Policy with respect to highway transport in Sweden has been developed by three factors of primary importance. The first of these is the vested interests of the rail lines, both private and state owned, which has influenced policy to favor rail lines. In contrast, however, private interests represented by industrial organizations have urged the development of highway transport, since such transport furnishes flexibility needed for fast, cheap, door-to-door transport.

The second factor which has influenced highway transport policy is the relative ease with which highway transport can be established and maintained, maintenance cost being particularly heavy on Swedish rail lines because of weather and terrain.

The third, and possibly the most important factor influencing highway policy is recognition by the state that despite its financial interest in the rail lines, highway transport enjoys a tremendous advantage in serving a population so widely scattered as to make rail operation uneconomic in a large part of the country.

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B. ORGANIZATION

1. Highway transport services are under the authority of the Board of Roads and Waterways (VAG - OCH VATTENBRGGNADSSSTYREL-SFN) in the Ministry of Communications.
2. The Board of Roads and Waterways has administrative control over all highway transportation and inland waterways, but through a policy of decentralization of control the provincial governments are given authority to issue concessions for operations and to establish rate schedules. Inter-province traffic rates are determined by that province in which the greatest portion of the travel is performed. Inter-province concessions are assigned through mutual agreement of the provinces concerned.
3. The Board of Roads and Waterways, in addition to technical and administrative matters regarding roads, has authority regarding ferries, canals and inland waterways. There is no administrative connection, however, between the agencies within the Board dealing with highways and the agencies dealing with waterways. All activities and policies are directed and coordinated by the Ministry of Communications. There is no relation between these agencies and the agencies dealing with merchant shipping and civil aviation, and no overlapping or conflict between the various agencies is apparent.
4. There is no apparent consideration being given to reorganizing the present structure of the Ministry of Communications as it affects road transport, nor is the creation of new administrative agencies under consideration.
5. The policies regarding road transport, as laid down by the Board of Roads and Waterways, appear to meet with the general approval of all parties concerned.

C. ADMINISTRATION

1. There appear to be no legal barriers to the establishment of new highway services for passenger and freight. Routes and rates must be authorized by the provincial governments to be served.
2. Proposed rates are determined by the operators and submitted to the provincial authorities in whose territory service is proposed. Approval of such rates is readily given since inequities may be subject to review if protested.
3. Free competition between transport media is a basic policy in Sweden. However, highway rates leading to deficit operations are discouraged as being inimical to the public

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interest. (Such operations adversely affect the rail systems, in which the state has a financial stake.)

In recent years, the railroads, in order to combat competition, have lowered their rates and organized truck operations in an effort to meet the competitive door-to-door service offered by the road carriers.

4. There is no uniform legislation applying to the country as a whole with regard to inspection and safety regulations. Such regulations are the responsibility of the provincial governments and indications are that such enforcement policies are not entirely successful.
5. There is no evidence of any particular interest on the part of the Government with regard to training of technicians in the field of highway transport. Sweden is noted, however, for a number of excellent technical schools whose curricula include instruction in such matters.
6. Highway transport carriers in Sweden have much to gain through the conclusion of international agreements concerning traffic, facilities, rates and other related matters. The general apathy of European governments, however, toward international highway transport and the strong position of the railroads in most countries has retarded the development of such agreements. At the present time, there is a considerable volume of long distance bus traffic operating passenger service weekly from Sweden as far south as Paris through neighboring states. In addition, long distance truck operations have grown rapidly, and at present there is considerable international traffic in fish and similar products. While the restoration of highway transport is notable, one factor acting to retard development of highway operations, international as well as domestic, is the acute shortage of vehicles.

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